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FM THE WHITE HOUSE

TO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

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~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE~~ [REDACTED] WH31980

DELIVER AT OPENING OF BUSINESS

SEPTEMBER 9, 1973

APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: MAR 2008

TO: TEHRAN
AMBASSADOR HELMS/EYES ONLY

HR70-14
(U)

FROM: THE WHITE HOUSE
BRENT SCOWCROFT/HAL SAUNDERS

IN REPLY TO YOUR QUERY, THE WORK DONE HERE ON CONTINGENCY PLANNING FOR SAUDI ARABIA HAS SOUGHT TO IDENTIFY THE MAIN ISSUES WE WOULD CONFRONT IN SEVERAL DIFFERENT SITUATIONS. WE DO NOT HAVE DETAILED SCENARIOS OR ELABORATE PLANS AT THIS STAGE, BUT I GATHER WHAT YOU NEED IS SIMPLY A DEFINITION OF THE SITUATIONS WE MIGHT CONCEIVABLY FACE.

THE BEST ESTIMATE OF THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY CONTINUES TO BE THAT A RADICAL TAKEOVER IN SAUDI ARABIA IS UNLIKELY. OUR CURRENT EFFORTS IN SAUDI ARABIA ARE, OF COURSE, DESIGNED TO STRENGTHEN THE REGIME AND TO DEVELOP CLOSE RELATIONS WITH PROBABLE SUCCESSORS TO FAISAL SUCH AS FAHD

AND SULTAN. BUT AS YOU WELL KNOW, THE PURPOSE OF CONTINGENCY PLANNING IS TO THINK ABOUT WHAT WE COULD FACE IF OUR BEST EFFORTS FAIL.

THE CONTINGENCY PLANNING EXERCISE SO FAR HAS IDENTIFIED SEVERAL SITUATIONS IN WHICH SOME ACTION MIGHT BE CALLED FOR BY OUTSIDERS TO HELP THE SAUDI REGIME. THESE SITUATIONS ARE DEFINED AND HANDLED IN THE PRESENT WORKING PAPERS AS FOLLOWS:

--GRADUAL DETERIORATION OF STABILITY AND SECURITY WITHIN SAUDI ARABIA, PERHAPS AS A RESULT OF ANTI-REGIME SENTIMENT STIMULATED BY RENEWAL OF ARAB-ISRAELI HOSTILITIES. IN THIS SITUATION WE WOULD PREPARE TO EVACUATE THE 8000 US CITIZENS IN THE COUNTRY, COULD ALERT US INTERVENTION FORCES, DELIVER REQUESTED MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT, AND CONSULT WITH JORDAN AND IRAN ABOUT JOINT ACTIONS IN THE EVENT OF A SERIOUS THREAT TO THE REGIME.

--A SUCCESSION CRISIS FOLLOWING KING'S DEATH, IN WHICH ARMY TAKEOVER APPEARS LIKELY. ASSUMING THAT FAHD AND SULTAN HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO CONSOLIDATE LEADERSHIP, US COULD CONSIDER WORKING WITH JORDAN AND IRAN TO TRY TO RESTORE ORDER UNDER NEW REGIME HEADED BY YOUNGER PRINCES WITH SUPPORT OF ARMY. SOME MILITARY PREPARATIONS MIGHT BE UNDERTAKEN BY JORDAN AND IRAN TO LEND WEIGHT TO AN EFFORT TO STABILIZE SITUATION.

--PARTIALLY SUCCESSFUL COUP BY ARMY ELEMENTS, LEADING TO PROTRACTED CIVIL WAR AND OUTSIDE INTERVENTION BY IRAQIS. IN SUCH AN EVENT, US COULD EVACUATE SOME CITIZENS AND MOVE FORCES TO STAGING AREAS FOR POSSIBLE INTERVENTION TO PROTECT REMAINING CITIZENS AND CONTROL OIL FIELDS. CONSULTATIONS WITH IRAN ON HOW TO DETER IRAQ COULD TAKE PLACE, ALONG WITH WARNINGS TO SOVIETS OF CONSEQUENCES OF IRAQI INTERVENTION. JORDAN COULD BE ENCOURAGED TO AID FRIENDLY SAUDI ELEMENTS, WITH US LOGISTICAL BACKUP.

--A SUCCESSFUL ARMY COUP, IN WHICH RADICAL ELEMENTS SEIZE CONTROL OF THE COUNTRY. IN THIS CONTINGENCY, PRESSURES WOULD BUILD QUICKLY ON US TO ACT, EVEN IN THE ABSENCE OF FIRM INFORMATION ABOUT THE NEW REGIME'S ORIENTATION. CONSULTATIONS WITH JORDAN AND IRAN WOULD HAVE TO TAKE PLACE, AND, IF INTERVENTION AGAINST THE REGIME WERE JUDGED NECESSARY, JORDAN MIGHT PLAY THE MAIN ROLE OF TRYING TO SEIZE KEY AIRFIELDS FROM WHICH AIR STRIKES COULD BE CARRIED OUT. IRAN'S ROLE MIGHT BE PRIMARILY THAT OF DETERRING IRAQ FROM INTERVENTION. ISRAEL COULD ACT TO RESTRAIN SYRIA FROM MOVING AGAINST JORDAN.

IN DISCUSSING THESE POSSIBLE SCENARIOS AT THE SRG, QUESTIONS AROSE CONCERNING JORDAN'S CAPABILITIES FOR FILLING SUCH A SUBSTANTIAL ROLE. THE ALTERNATIVE OF MORE ACTIVE IRANIAN INVOLVEMENT, AS HENRY TOLD YOU, MET THE CRITICISM THAT IRANIAN INTERVENTION IN SAUDI ARABIA WOULD RESULT IN INCREASED ARAB-IRANIAN TENSIONS, MIGHT DESTROY THE LEGITIMACY OF ANY REGIME KEPT IN POWER WITH

IRAN'S HELP, AND WOULD TEND TO CONFIRM IN ARAB EYES THE IMAGE OF IRAN AS AN EXPANSIONIST POWER. FINALLY, THE ALTERNATIVE OF U.S. INTERVENTION, OTHER THAN FOR EVACUATION WITH A LINGERING SHOW OF FORCE TO PROTECT OIL INSTALLATIONS, DOES NOT LOOK VERY ATTRACTIVE IN VIEW OF OUR LIMITED ASSETS IN THE AREA AND THE LONG LEAD-TIMES FOR MOVING FORCES FROM EUROPE OR THE CONUS TO THE PERSIAN GULF BUT THE OPTION HAS TO BE LOOKED AT IN AN EXERCISE LIKE THIS. YOU WILL RECOGNIZE THE SENSITIVITY AND TENTATIVENESS OF THIS EVEN IN A CONTINGENCY PLAN.

FROM THIS EXERCISE, SEVERAL ISSUES REMAIN TO BE CONSIDERED. ONE CONTINGENCY THAT HAS NOT BEEN FULLY EXAMINED WOULD INVOLVE GROWING DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN KING FAISAL, WHO MIGHT WISH TO DRAG SAUDI ARABIA INTO THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT, AND PRINCESS FAHD AND SULTAN, WHO MIGHT OPPOSE SUCH A POLICY. HOW THE U.S. OR OTHERS MIGHT BE CALLED UPON TO ACT IN SUCH A SITUATION IS FAR FROM CLEAR.

FINALLY, AS YOU CAN SEE FROM THIS DISCUSSION, IRAN'S POSSIBLE ROLE IN DEALING WITH A SAUDI CONTINGENCY HAS NOT REALLY BEEN DEVELOPED HERE. THE FIRST QUESTION IS SIMPLY TO KNOW WHAT THE IRANIANS MIGHT BE ABLE AND WILLING TO DO. WE ALSO HAVE THE SAME QUESTION ABOUT JORDAN.

AGAIN, PLEASE RECOGNIZE THAT THE ABOVE REFLECTS ONLY AN INCOMPLETE DRAFT PLAN, AND NOT A REFINED PRODUCT. HOWEVER, WE THINK THE DEFINITION OF CONTINGENCIES COVERS THE GROUND.

1 AS WE DISCUSSED IN SAN CLEMENTE, PLEASE LET ME KNOW IF YOUR

